

The Puck Stops Here: Evolving Social Norms of Helmet Usage in the National Hockey League.

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The Puck Stops Here: Evolving Social Norms of Helmet Usage in the National Hockey League

Wise, SC; Scott, S; (2012) The Puck Stops Here: Evolving Social Norms of Helmet Usage in the National Hockey League. In: (Proceedings) CSSSA 2012: The Computational Social Science Society of America Conference, 18-21 September 2012, Santa Fe, New Mexico.



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Abstract

Since the mid 1960s, the use of safety helmets in the National Hockey League has seen almost universal adoption. Despite horrific injuries sustained by players, widespread helmet adoption did not take place immediately. We study the process of emerging norms in a social group, considering the historical circumstances surrounding the NHL helmet usage. We conduct a survey of the social science modeling of cultural norms and find that players' helmet usage decisions are influenced by their social network. We require helmet usage for new players. Model results are compared to data extracted by review of NHL game footage. The results show that the wide fluctuations in the actual historical adoption trend are better explained by interventionist strategies versus social network based adoption.

Type: Proceedings paper

Title: The Puck Stops Here: Evolving Social Norms of Helmet Usage in the National Hockey League

Event: CSSSA 2012: The Computational Social Science Society of America Conference, 18-21 September 2012, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Location: Santa Fe, NM

Dates: 18 September 2012 - 21 September 2012

Open access status: An open access version is available for this document

Publisher version: <https://computationsocialscience.com>

Language: English

Additional information: This is the published version of record. See the publisher's terms and conditions.

Keywords: Social Norms, Agent-Based Model, Norms

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UCL classification: [UCL > School of BEAMS > Faculty of Technology](#)
[UCL > School of BEAMS > Faculty of Technology & Design > Analysis](#)

URI: <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1007777>

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